

Help Russia Now, Says Wells, or Suffer in Her Ruin

Word Pictures of Glazounov Gorky, Shalyapin and Lenin

RUSSIA IN THE SHADOWS. By H. G. Wells. George H. Doran Company.

What stern self-control the universal historian must have exercised to go on writing about Alexander, Napoleon and Wilson, with The Future's page boy pounding on his study door and yelling, "Call for H. G. Wells!" But the second volume was finished before the calm avatar stopped, looked and listened to the clamorous voice. When he opened the study door at last, the messenger popped in and gasped with his last breath: "Russia!"

So H. G., at once the most authoritative and obedient of prophets, without any similarity whatever to the reluctant Jonah of old, set off at once to the land where The Next Chapter was waiting to be written.

In the concluding pages of this new book Wells pleads with the reader not to lose sight for a moment of the shortness of our visit to Russia, and of my personal limitations. Critics who deny to H. G. a consciousness of his own fallibility, please take notice. But having acknowledged that much he states convictions and conclusions in the most positive tone. The only possible government, he says, that can save off a final collapse in Russia is the present Bolshevik machine. And he can do so only with immediate and strong aid from America and the Western European Powers. As a basis for such dealing he declares his belief that the Bolsheviks are "on the whole honest." Their aim is the establishment of "a mitigated communism, with a large-scale handling of transport, industry and (later) agriculture."

A fact that must be accepted, according to Wells, is the "invincible prejudice against individual business men." He declares that they will be "at the completest disadvantage" in attempting to deal with the present regime. Here is the suggestion of a possible arrangement:

"There is only one being in Russia with whom the Western world can deal and that is the Bolshevik Government itself, and there is no way of dealing with that one being safely and effectively except through some national or, better, some international trust. This latter body, which might represent some single Power or group of Powers, or which might even have some titular connection with the League of Nations, would be able to deal with the Bolshevik Government on equal terms."

It would have to recognize the Bolshevik Government and in conjunction with it to set about the new urgent task of the material restoration of civilized life in European and Asiatic Russia. It should resemble in its general nature one of the big buying and controlling trusts that were so necessary and effectual in the European states during the Great War. It should deal with its

individual producers on the one hand and the Bolshevik Government would deal with its own population on the other. Such a trust could speedily make itself indispensable to the Bolshevik Government. This indeed is the only way in which a capitalist state can hold commerce with a communist state. The attempts that have been made during the past year and more to devise some method of private trading in Russia without recognition of the Bolshevik Government were from the outset as hopeless as the search for the Northwest Passage from England to India. The channels are frozen up."

And over against the possibility of a reclaimed Russia, Wells draws the dark picture of the land as it will be if America and Western Europe does not come to the rescue:

"Nothing like this Russian downfall has ever happened before. If it goes on for a year or so more the process of collapse will be complete. Nothing will be left of Russia but a country of peasants, the towns will be practically deserted and in ruins, the railways will be rusting in disuse. With the railways will go the last vestiges of any general government. The peasants are absolutely illiterate and collectively stupid, capable of resisting interference, but incapable of comprehensive foresight and organization. They will become a sort of human swamp in a state of division, petty civil war and political squalor, with a famine whenever the harvests are bad, and they will be breeding epidemics for the rest of Europe. They will lapse toward Asia."

"The collapse of the civilized system in Russia into peasant barbarism means that Europe will be cut off for many years from all the mineral wealth of Russia, and from any supply of raw products from this area, from its corn, its flax and the like. It is an open question whether the Western Powers can get along without these supplies. Their cessation certainly means a general impoverishment of Western Europe."

Set between his report of present conditions and his formula for a cure, Wells's interview with Lenin (or Lenin, as he dreads it) is the heart of his book. "The Dreamer in the Kremlin" he calls this chapter. He remarks that the isolation in which Lenin sits, while it may be necessary for his safety, puts Russia out of his reach. The impression is that he is somewhat at the mercy of his associates when it comes to getting knowledge of what is going on in the country over whose affairs he exercises a degree of direction.

Throughout the interview an American was snapping a camera at the talkers, as though it were a New York legislative investigation. But H. G.

Wells needs no camera to make pictures for his text.

"I sat down in a chair at a corner of the desk," he begins, "and the little man—his feet scarcely touch the ground as he sits on the edge of his chair—twisted round to talk to me, putting his arms round and over a pile of papers. He spoke excellent English, but it was, I thought, rather characteristic of the present condition of Russian affairs that Mr. Rothstein chaperoned the conversation, occasionally offering footnotes and other assistance."

"I had been told that Lenin lectured people; he certainly did not do so on this occasion. Lenin has a pleasant, quick changing, brownish face, with a lively smile and a habit (due perhaps to some defect in focus-

ing) of screwing up an eye as he pauses in his talk. He is not very like the photographs you see of him because he is one of those people whose change of expression is more important than their features. . . . He talked quickly, very keen on his subject, without any posing or pretences or reservations, as a good type of scientific man will talk."

And this scientific impression is carried out in the dream of "The Dreamer in the Kremlin."

"For Lenin, who like a good orthodox Marxist denounces all 'Utopians,' has succumbed at last to a Utopia, the Utopia of the electricians. He is throwing all his weight into a scheme for the development of great power stations in Russia to serve whole provinces with light, with transport and

industrial power. Two experimental districts he said had already been electrified. Can one imagine a more courageous project in a vast flat land of forests and illiterate peasants, with no water power, with no technical skill available, and with trade and industry at the last gasp? Projects for such an electrification are in process of development in Holland and they have been discussed in England, and in those densely populated and industrially highly developed centres one can imagine them as successful, economical and altogether beneficial. But their application to Russia is an altogether greater strain upon the constructive imagination. I cannot see anything of the sort happening in this dark crystal of Russia, but this little man at the Kremlin can; he sees the decaying railways replaced by a new electric transport, sees new roadways spreading throughout the land, sees a new and happier Communist industrialism arising again. While I talked to him he almost persuaded me to share his vision."

However one may doubt the value of economic reports on the state of a great nation drawn from a few days' inquiry, it is impossible to forget the portraits of Lenin, Gorky, Glazounov and others that glow from these brief and brilliant pages.

When Fate Struck Donald Was There

ZIZI'S CAREER. By Evelyn Van Buren. The Bobbs-Merrill Company.

This is another of the stories of a young girl from the West eager for a brilliant stage career, to be equalled only by Mary Anderson and Sarah Bernhardt; these two great persons are in fact the actresses whom her mother, a strange creature quite remote from anything human, constantly urges her to rival.

When she finally comes to New York to be trained to take a leading role in a play written by her teacher, to whom the author gives the un-Italian name of "Crispiano," she meets a great disappointment and a particularly shocking surprise. On the eve of the production of "Cleo" Crispiano sends her away from the rehearsal, saying that she will never be able to play the part and he will permit her to ruin his piece. When the heroine rushes to her mother—who had come East to witness her triumph—with this awful news, that astute lady surmises that the author-manager has found somebody else. It is true. The somebody else, a young stranger from the West, went on in the part and thrilled the town. Then she came to the hotel to crowd over- fortunate Zizi and her mother. She was the little green-eyed sister "Baby" who from the cradle had been Zizi's bete noire.

Naturally, then, it was the turn of the young man who had had to stand aside for Zizi's career. And the reader may recall a conversation she had had with Donald before she came to New York. They were talking of his future plans—Zizi is telling the story:

"I asked: 'How are you going to get rich, Donald?'"

"That day Donald looked softly up into the branches above the hammock. 'He said: 'Ruskin says that man is richest who has the widest helpful influence over the lives of others.' 'Frequently Donald dealt a little blow like this. He was no doubt thinking of the Irish—his people. He wrote upon the Irish situation and published his writings; receiving money for this, too."

"I said: 'But don't you want to make a lot of money?' 'He should not disappoint my mother now. He read my thoughts. He said: 'She expects more of me than just getting money. It is not the all important—'"

"I said: 'Yes it is. You can't like being poor. Only a great deal is enough. Don't you want a great deal then?'"

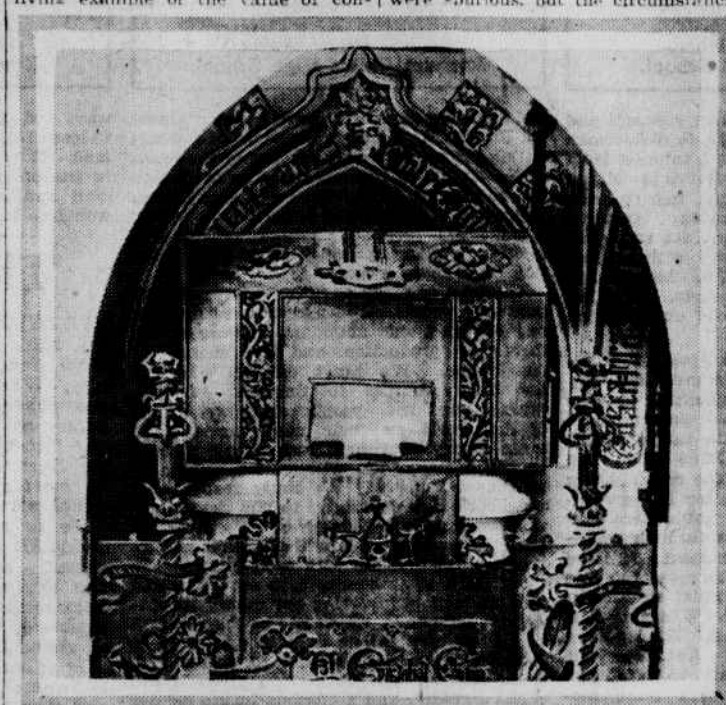
"He thrust out his chin. Almost fiercely he said: 'Yes!'"

Of course a man who could thrust out his chin like that would manage to arrive at the moment when everything was going wrong to take charge of Zizi. He did.

Conspectus of the Spanish Main

A GUIDE TO THE WEST INDIES. BERMUDA AND PANAMA. By Frederick A. Ober. Third Revised Edition. Dodd, Mead & Co.

Frederick A. Ober, the author of a series of guide books to the West Indies and of sundry works relating to lands about the Spanish Main, is a living example of the value of con-



Box containing the ashes of Columbus at cathedral in Santo Domingo.

centration of ideal and purpose. He has devoted himself more largely to exploring and studying this region of the earth than any other person, American or European, and he has done immense service in informing the world with regard to it and in smoothing the way for travellers.

A third revised edition of the "Guide" is just out from the press of Dodd, Mead & Co., and it seems to crown the series with facts and figures and description of conditions brought down to the beginning of the current year. It makes a plump duodecimo volume—over 500 pages—because none of the older material, historical and descriptive, has been cut out to make room for the new material.

Though in every essential a guide-book, the work is more than that; it is a small encyclopedia so far as its subject is concerned. Nothing that may cater to the interest of student or visitor is neglected, and everything is presented with an eye to its picturesque as well as its utilitarian aspects. The work covers the Bermudas and Bahamas, the Greater and Lesser Antilles, Tobago and Trinidad and the Panama Canal Zone, and it embraces everything from the days of early discovery down to the present price of board and lodging. Naturally, Cuba and Porto Rico and the Zone, in view of their close political relations with the United States, are most exhaustively treated, but there are full discussions at Haiti and Santo Domingo, Jamaica and the other principal islands. Even the smallest has its page or so, with outline of topography, population, economic features, tourist attractions and business opportunities.

The island of Santo Domingo has particular interest for Americans because of its close relation to the discovery of America. Columbus made a number of visits there after 1492, and before his death directed that his body be taken there from Spain. This was done in 1549. It was believed for a long time that the great discoverer's bones had been removed to Havana. But in 1877, as Mr. Ober relates, "another discovery was made that completely refuted the scant evidence in support of this belief. Another vault was found, while some workmen were making repairs in the cathedral, which on investigation was discovered to contain a leaden casket, inscribed with the initial letters of Christopher Columbus's name and his title. These were on the lid's exterior, while inside was an inscription: 'Hic tre y E'do Varon, D'n Cristoval Colon,' or 'Illustrious and noble gentleman, Don Christopher Columbus.'"

"The box contained some crumbling human bones, with only a few portions of the skeleton remaining—the skull having been entirely reduced to dust—a large bullet and a small silver plate. The bullet is supposed to have been one received by Columbus in his body

surrounding the discovery and the high character of the witnesses, such as the Archbishop and canon of the cathedral and the foreign consuls, who were present at the exhumation, preclude this assumption."

The book is likely to be valuable not only to tourists and business voyagers but in the library as well as a work of reference. Distinctive flora and fauna are also well described, as, for instance, the cacao or "chocolate" tree as a product of the Grenada group.

There are a number of half-tones illustrations, well selected and well printed. The maps of the larger islands are good, but there is a lack of detail maps of islands of the second class, such as Barbados, St. Lucia and Martinique, which are to be found in the best English guidebooks. These, however, are not likely to be much missed by Americans, for whose use this guide is especially designed. As the West Indies increases in favor as a playground for inhabitants of the Atlantic States, and they are so growing by leaps and bounds, the value of Mr. Ober's gift of light and leading will steadily increase in the public estimation.

When George Ade was in New York recently he was the guest of honor at a dinner of the Lotus Club. To each guest was given a portfolio containing a handsome portrait of Mr. Ade in an arabesque of scenes from his work.

Harry A. Franck, author of "Vagabonding Through Changing Germany" (Harpers) and many other books of unconventional travel, is engaged in a series of lectures which promises to keep this incorrigible wanderer from staying too long in any one place. Between now and the end of April Mr. Franck expects to deliver his lectures in most of the principal cities of Canada and the Eastern States.

Alan Seeger, the young American poet who gave his life for France, has become a national hero in the land he died to save. The leading literateurs of France, together with numerous public men, are at the head of a movement to erect a statue to the poet.

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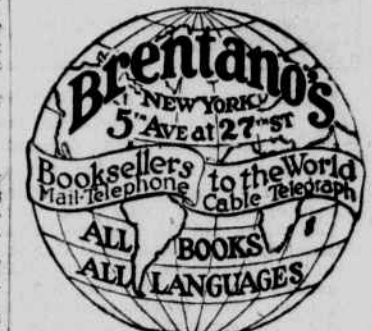
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